

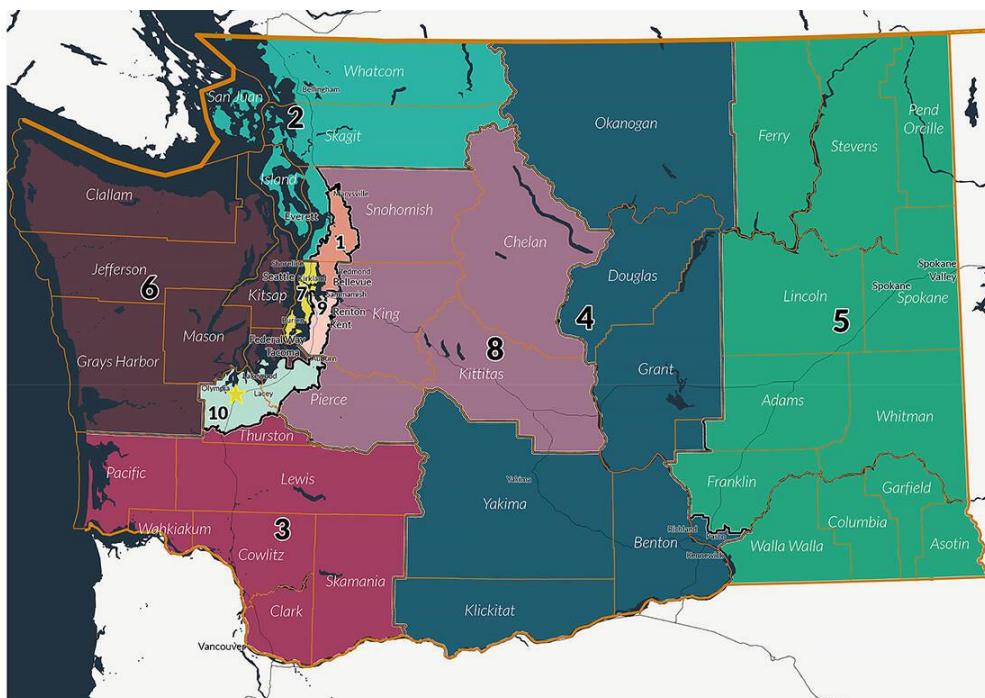
State Supreme Court declines to draw new redistricting plan

Many Snohomish County voters are now a big step closer to having new representation in the state Legislature.

by [Jerry Cornfield](#)

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Commissioner Approved Congressional District Map November 15, 2021

The congressional district map submitted to the Legislature for approval. (Washington State Redistricting Commission)

OLYMPIA — The state Supreme Court won't redraw boundaries of Washington's legislative and congressional districts after all.

On Friday, [a unanimous court](#) said the bipartisan [Redistricting Commission](#) did its job, though it missed its deadline by minutes, and should send the new political maps it drew to the Legislature.

“The court concludes that the primary purpose of achieving a timely redistricting plan would be impeded, not advanced, by rejecting the Commission’s completed work,” Chief Justice Steven González wrote [in the ruling](#).

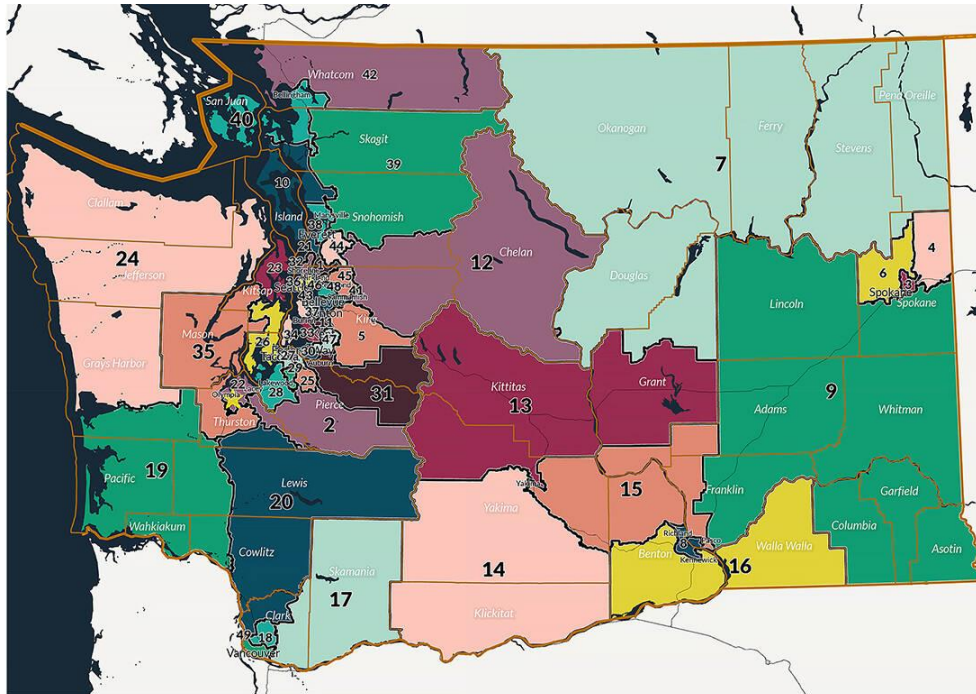
The five-page order returns the work to the commission for any final steps necessary before sending the new maps to the Legislature.

Barring tinkering by state lawmakers, many Snohomish County residents [will be in new political environs](#). And one of the county’s delegation in Olympia is going to have to make a big decision.

Under the commission’s final congressional map, Snohomish County would continue to be divided among three congressional districts. But not the same trio as today.

The plan moves the 7th Congressional District out of Snohomish County while bringing the 8th District in. Darrington, Sultan, Gold Bar and Index, which are now in the 1st District and served by U.S. Rep. Suzan DelBene, D-Medina, would land in the 8th District, a seat held by Rep. Kim Schrier, D-Sammamish.

The commission redrew the 2nd Congressional District to extend south to the King County line and, in the north, absorb all of Whatcom and Skagit counties from the 1st District. Cities along I-5 in Snohomish County would stay in the 2nd District. The 1st District becomes more compact as it gains populated urban areas in the county to offset lost turf farther north.



Washington State Redistricting Commission
Commissioner Approved Legislative District Map November 15, 2021

The legislative map submitted to the Legislature for approval. (Washington State Redistricting Commission)

The final map of legislative districts moves Monroe, Sultan, Gold Bar and Index out of the 39th District and into a reconfigured 12th District that will straddle the mountains. Those communities will be united with ones along Highway 2 in Chelan County, including Leavenworth, Cashmere, Dryden and Wenatchee.

Commissioners also removed Lake Stevens from the 44th District and put it on the 39th. Mill Creek and Snohomish will remain in the 44th.

That adds a wrinkle to the process of filling a vacancy created when Democratic senator Steve Hobbs of Lake Stevens resigned to become secretary of state.

Democratic Rep. John Lovick of Mill Creek is likely to move to the Senate. Four people — Sean Paddock, Brandy Donaghy, Joyce Copley and Anne Anderson — are vying for the anticipated opening in the House that would result from Lovick's move. Copley and Anderson live in Lake Stevens and would only be able to serve through next year's election, should they get appointed.

Meanwhile, the new map leaves Rep. Shelley Kloba, D-Kirkland, outside the 1st District that she's represented since 2017. Her home will be in the redrawn 45th District, which

already has two veteran Democratic representatives — Roger Goodman and Larry Springer.

She could challenge one of them, move to a new residence in the 1st District or step aside when her term expires.

“It was an uncertainty until today,” she said Friday. “Now there are a set of choices on the table to consider.”

Lawmakers [may amend the maps](#) within the first 30 days of the session — which begins Jan. 10 — by a two-thirds vote of both chambers. Any changes to individual districts may not exceed 2% of the total population.

Once the 30-day period ends, the new boundaries are in effect and will be in force for a decade, starting with next year’s elections.

Commission spokesman Jamie Nixon said the court’s quick decision was appreciated. Commissioners “will carefully review the decision and update the public on next steps soon.”

House Speaker Laurie Jenkins, D-Tacoma, said the ruling “provides certainty going forward. The people of Washington deserve constitutionally compliant maps as soon as possible and I look forward to this process coming to a close.”

But Senate Majority Leader Andy Billig, D-Spokane, expressed less enthusiasm. In a written statement, Billig reiterated his concern that a majority-minority district drawn in the Yakima Valley does not comport with federal law.

“We had hoped the Court would take a closer look at several aspects of the map that may not comply with state and federal laws and make changes,” he said. “Even if we are not in full agreement, we respect the Court’s authority and will move forward accordingly.”

Republican leaders of the House and Senate previously urged the justices to adopt the maps submitted to them by the commission.

Until Friday, [the Supreme Court](#) seemed [poised to be the final arbiter of political boundaries](#) because of the commission’s lapses.

The four voting members of the commission — two Democrats and two Republicans — [faced a deadline](#) of 11:59 p.m. Nov. 15 to approve final maps for the state’s 49 legislative and 10 congressional districts. They also needed to deliver their maps and other paperwork to administrators of the House and Senate by then.

They didn’t make it.

After reviewing a sworn declaration by the commission's non-partisan chair, justices concluded commissioners approved the maps by the constitutional deadline. It took another 13 minutes to send them and the required resolution to the administrators of the chambers.

"After reviewing the submissions and considering the constitutional and statutory framework as a whole, we conclude it is not necessary for the court to assume responsibility for adoption of redistricting maps under the present circumstances," Gonzalez wrote. "This is not a situation in which the Supreme Court must step in because the Commission has failed to agree on a plan it believes complies with state and federal requirements."

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